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Restlawn Park Cemetery & Mausoleum, Inc.



August 6, 1999

Secretary, Federal Trade Commission
- Room H-159 -
600 Pennsylvania Avenue
- N. W. -
Washington, D.C. 20580

REF: "16 CFR Part 453"

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to express our public opinion regarding the funeral rule. As a cemeterian for over 30 years, I feel it's my duty to share information from my customers regarding their frustrations and uncertainties in dealing with various funeral homes. The general public is strongly traditional when deciding which funeral facility to use at a time of death. Since many funeral homes have remained owned and operated by the same family for several generations, the average public finds comfort in using the same facility that their grandparents or parents used when ever a death occurs. Arranging funeral services is not an everyday or often performed task, thus causing the average person to return to previously used facilities and unconsciously respond to television and news print advertising of a familiar name of a funeral facility. The funeral rule has helped inform the public of the various cost associated with the service. The people have told me there now seems to be more items to be charged for in the funeral service then ever before and the prices are so much higher. Since my market area is the greater New Orleans, Louisiana community, the comments from my customers are primarily directed toward a large conglomerate owning and operating several local funeral facilities. Many of these facilities were third, fourth, and fifth generation owned prior to their purchase by the conglomerate. Newspaper and television advertising continues to show the facility and the recognized traditional name and even a photograph of the prior owner or funeral director to perpetuate the tradition of being locally owned and operated. When these funeral homes are advertised, no mention is ever made that it is now owned and operated by ABC conglomerate located elsewhere. The public no longer finds the familiar faces and comfort they experienced from past funerals and act somewhat confused about their experiences and the many changes at the funeral home. When final arrangements are being made, the public awareness of the unfamiliar faces and higher costs are not as apparent until a few weeks after the funeral. The funeral directors in these conglomerates are claiming to live with the funeral rule and full disclosure; however, thru many discussions with customers, the funeral director is falling terribly short in disclosure that his facility is owned and operated by a conglomerate and the recognized namesake of the facility has retired years ago. The public would benefit in a more equal playing field with more competition by small independents.

Sincerely,

Larry J. Chedotal, Sr.

LJC/gbp

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